CLAIMS

We claim.

1.   A method for integrated event tracking of an electronic escrow
transaction, comprising:
     receiving an instruction from a purchaser, via a network, to
effect an electronic escrow transaction associated with a sale,
made via the network, of goods or services from a seller;
     directing at least one network communication with each of the
purchaser, the seller and at least one financial institution in
effecting the electronic escrow transaction; and
     storing a log of each communication, including the
instruction, associated with the electronic escrow transaction

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
     initiating a debit from an account associated with the
purchaser;
     storing an indication of the initiation of the debit from the
purchaser account;
     initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller;
and
     storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
seller account.

3.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
     initiating a debit from an account associated with a
processing agent; and
     storing an indication of the initiation of the debit from the
processing agent account.

4.   The method of claim 3, further comprising:
     initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller;
and
     storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
seller account;

6   wherein the credit to the seller account is a corresponding
7 credit to the debit from the processing agent account.

1 5.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   transmitting a notice, via the network, to the seller that
3 funds from an account associated with the purchaser are available
4 and that the seller should ship the goods to, or provide the
5 service for, the purchaser; and
6   storing an indication that the notice has been transmitted to
7 the seller.

1 6.   The method of claim 5, wherein:
2   the notice is transmitted after at least one of (i) a
3 predetermined period, beginning at initiation of a debit to an
4 account associated with a purchaser, has elapsed, or (ii) funds
5 from the purchaser account are credited to an account associated
6 with a service provider.

1 7.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a first notice of one of (i) the
3 goods having been shipped, or (ii) the services having been
4 performed;
5   storing an indication that the first notice has been received;
6   transmitting a second notice, via the network, to the
7 purchaser that the seller has one of (i) shipped the goods to
8 purchaser, or (ii) performed the services for the purchaser; and
9   storing an indication that the second notice has been
10 transmitted to the purchaser;
11   wherein the first notice is received from at least one of (i)
12 a shipping agent, or (ii) the seller.

1 8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the first notice includes a
2 delivery tracking number.

1 9.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a notice of one of (i) the goods

72

3 having been received from the seller and being acceptable, or (ii)
4 the services having been acceptably performed by the seller; and
5   storing an indication that the notice has been received;
6   wherein the notice is received from at least one of (i) the
7 seller, (ii) a shipping agent, or (iii) the purchaser.

1 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
2   initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller;
3 and
4   storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
5 seller account;
6   wherein the credit to the seller account is initiated
7 subsequent to receiving the notice.

1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a notice of one of (i) the goods
3 having been shipped by the seller, or (ii) the services having been
4 performed by the seller;
5   initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller;
6   storing an indication that the notice has been received; and
7   storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
8 seller account;
9   wherein the credit to the seller account is initiated after a
10 predetermined period, beginning at receipt of the notice; and
11   wherein the notice is received from at least one of (i) the
12 seller, or (ii) a shipping agent.

1 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a notice of one of (i) the goods
3 having been received from the seller and being unacceptable, (ii)
4 the goods having not been received from the seller, (iii) the
5 services having not been acceptably performed by the seller, or
6 (iv) the services having not been performed by the seller; and
7   storing an indication that the notice has been received.

1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the notice includes a notice

2   to suspend a pending credit to an account associated with the
3   seller

1   14.   The method of claim 12, wherein the notice includes a notice
2   to reverse a debit to an account associated with the purchaser.

1   15.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a first notice that the goods have
3   been returned shipped to the seller;
4   storing an indication that the first notice has been received;
5   transmitting to the seller, via the network, a second notice
6   that the goods have been returned shipped from the purchaser; and
7   storing an indication that the second notice has been
8   transmitted to the seller;
9   wherein the first notice is received from at least one of (i)
10   the purchaser, or (ii) a shipping agent.

1   16.   The method of claim 15, wherein the first notice includes a
2   delivery tracking number.

1   17.   The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2   receiving, via the network, a third notice that the goods have
3   been received by the seller; and
4   storing an indication that the third notice has been received;
5   wherein the third notice is received from at least one of (i)
6   the seller, or (ii) the shipping agent.

1   18.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   initiating a credit to an account associated with the
3   purchaser; and
4   storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
5   purchaser account;
6   wherein the credit to the purchaser account is initiated at
7   after least one of (i) upon receipt of a notice, via the network
8   from at least one of the seller or a shipping agent, that the goods
9   have been delivered to the seller, or (ii) after a predetermined

74

10   period, beginning at a notification to the seller that the
11   purchaser has shipped the goods to the seller, has elapsed.

1   19. The method of claim 1, wherein the goods or services are goods
2   or services purchased from an Internet auction.

1   20. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   initiating a debit from an account associated with the
3   purchaser;
4   initiating a credit to an escrow account associated with a
5   processing agent;
6   initiating a debit to the escrow account associated with the
7   processing agent;
8   initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller;
9   storing an indication of the initiation of the debit to the
10   purchaser account; and
11   storing an indication of the initiation of the credit to the
12   seller account.

1   21. The method of claim 20, wherein the credit to the escrow
2   account is a corresponding credit to the debit from the purchaser
3   account.

1   22. The method of claim 20, wherein the credit to the seller
2   account is a corresponding credit to the debit from the escrow
3   account.

1   23. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving the instruction via a web page generated subsequent
3   to the purchaser selecting a hyper-link presented to the purchaser
4   by an Internet web site selling goods or services;
5   wherein the web page presented to the purchaser includes
6   details of the sale.

1   24. The method of claim 1, wherein the stored logged
2   communications include an indication of the date and time each

3   communication is received or transmitted.

1   25. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   retrieving any of the logged and stored communications.

1   26. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2   receiving, from a shipping agent, a first notice that goods
3   have been delivered to the purchaser;
4   storing an indication that the first notice has been received;
5   receiving, from the purchaser, a second notice that the
6   delivered goods are acceptable;
7   storing an indication that the second notice has been
8   received; and
9   initiating a credit to an account associated with the seller.

10   27. The method of claim 26, wherein:
11   the credit to the account associated with the seller is
12   initiated after at least one of (i) a predetermined period,
13   beginning upon receipt of the first notice, has elapsed, or (ii)
14   receipt of the second notice.

1   28. A system for integrated event tracking of an electronic escrow
2   transaction, comprising:
3   a communications port configured to receive and to transmit
4   information via a network;
5   a processor in communication with the communications port and
6   configured to direct at least one network communication with each
7   of a purchaser, a seller and at least one financial institution in
8   effecting an electronic escrow transaction arising out of a sale of
9   goods or services made via a network, and to log and store each
10   communication associated with the electronic escrow transaction;
11   and
12   a memory in communication with the processor and configured to
13   store the logged communications.

1   29. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further

2 configured to:
3   receive an instruction from the purchaser, via network
4 communication, to effect the electronic escrow transaction; and
5   store an indication of the received instruction in the memory.

1 30. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2 configured to:
3   initiate a debit from an account associated with the
4 purchaser;
5   store an indication in the memory of the initiation of the
6 debit from the purchaser account;
7   initiate a credit to an account associated with the seller;
8 and
9   store an indication in the memory of the initiation of the
10 credit to the seller account.

1 31. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2 configured to:
3   initiate a debit from an account associated with a processing
4 agent; and
5   store an indication in the memory of the initiation of the
6 debit from the processing agent account.

1 32. The system of claim 31, wherein:
2   the processor is further configured to initiate a credit to an
3 account associated with the seller and store an indication in the
4 memory of the initiation of the credit to the seller account; and
5   the credit to the seller account is a corresponding credit to
6 the debit from the processing agent account.

1 33. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2 configured to:
3   transmit a notice, via network communication, to the seller
4 that funds from an account associated with the purchaser are
5 available and that the seller should ship the goods to, or provide
6 the service for, the purchaser; and

7   store an indication in the memory that the notice has been
8   transmitted to the seller.

1   34. The system of claim 33, wherein the notice is transmitted
2   after at least one of (i) a predetermined period, beginning at
3   initiation of a debit to an account associated with the purchaser,
4   has elapsed, or (ii) funds from the purchaser account are credited
5   to an account associated with a processing agent.

1   35. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2   configured to:
3   receive, via network communication, a first notice of (i) the
4   goods having been shipped to the purchaser, or (ii) the services
5   having been performed for the purchaser;
6   store in the memory an indication that the first notice has
7   been received;
8   transmit a second notice, via network communication, to the
9   purchaser that the seller has one of (i) shipped the goods to the
10 purchaser, or (ii) performed the services for the purchaser; and
11   store in the memory an indication that the second notice has
12 been transmitted to the purchaser.

1   36. The system of claim 35, wherein the first notice includes a
2   delivery tracking number.

1   37. The system of claim 35, wherein the first notice is transmitted
2   by at least one of (i) the seller, or (ii) a shipping agent.

1   38. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2   configured to:
3   receive, via network communication from at least one of the
4   purchaser, the seller, and a shipping agent, a notice of one of (i)
5   the goods having been received from the seller and being
6   acceptable, or (ii) the services having been acceptably performed
7   by the seller; and
8   store in the memory an indication that the notice has been

9 received.

1 39. The system of claim 38, wherein:
2   the processor is further configured to initiate a credit to an
3 account associated with the seller and store an indication in the
4 memory of the initiation of the credit to the seller account; and
5   the credit to the seller account is initiated subsequent to
6 receiving the notice.

1 40. The system of claim 28, wherein:
2   the processor is further configured to receive, via network
3 communication, a notice of (i) the goods having been shipped by the
4 seller, or (ii) the services having been performed by the seller,
5 initiate a credit to an account associated with the seller, store
6 an indication in the memory of the initiation of the credit to the
7 seller account;
8   the credit to the seller account is initiated after a
9 predetermined period, beginning at receipt of the notice; and
10   the notice is received from at least one of (i) the seller, or
11 (ii) a shipping agent.

1 41. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2 configured to:
3   receive, via network communication, a notice of one of (i) the
4 goods having been received from the seller and being unacceptable,
5 (ii) the goods having not been received from the seller, (iii) the
6 services having not been acceptably performed by the seller, or
7 (iv) the services having not been performed by the seller; and
8   store in the memory an indication that the notice has been
9 received.

1 42. The system of claim 41, wherein the notice includes a notice
2 to suspend a pending credit to an account associated with the
3 seller.

43. The system of claim 41, wherein the notice includes a notice
to reverse a debit to an account associated with the purchaser.

44. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
configured to:

receive, via network communication from at least one of the
purchaser or a shipping agent, a first notice that the goods have
been returned shipped to the seller;

store in the memory an indication that the first notice has
been received;

transmit to the seller, via network communication, a second
notice that the goods have been returned shipped from the
purchaser; and

store in the memory an indication that the second notice has
been transmitted to the seller.

45. The system of claim 44, wherein the first notice includes a
delivery tracking number.

46. The system of claim 44, wherein the processor is further
configured to:

receive, via network communication from at least one of the
seller or a shipping agent, a third notice that the goods have been
received by the seller; and

store in the memory an indication that the third notice has
been received.

47. The system of claim 28, wherein:

the processor is further configured to initiate a credit to an
account associated with the purchaser and store in the memory an
indication of the initiation of the credit to the purchaser
account; and

the credit to the purchaser account is initiated after at
least one of (i) receipt of a notice, via network communication
from a least one of the seller or a shipping agent, that the goods
have been returned to the seller by the purchaser and accepted by

10 the seller, or (ii) a predetermined period, beginning at a
11 notification to the seller that the purchaser has shipped the goods
12 to the seller, has elapsed.

1   48. The system of claim 28, wherein the goods or services are
2   goods or services purchased from an internet auction.

1   49. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2   configured to:
3   initiate a debit from an account associated with the
4   purchaser;
5   initiate a credit to an escrow account associated with a
6   processing agent;
7   initiate a debit to the escrow account associated with the
8   processing agent;
9   initiate a credit to an account associated with the seller;
10   store an indication in the memory of the initiation of the
11 debit to the purchaser account; and
12   store an indication in the memory of the initiation of the
13 credit to the seller account.

1   50. The system of claim 49, wherein the credit to the escrow
2   account is a corresponding credit to the debit from the purchaser
3   account.

1   51. The system of claim 49, wherein the credit to the seller
2   account is a corresponding credit to the debit from the escrow
3   account.

1   52. The system of claim 28, wherein:
2   the communications port is further configured to receive an
3   instruction, via a web page generated subsequent to the purchaser
4   selecting a hyper-link presented to the purchaser by an Internet
5   web site selling goods or services, to direct execution of an
6   electronic escrow transaction for a sale transaction; and

7   the web page presented to the purchaser includes details of
8   the purchase made from the internet web site.

1   53. The system of claim 28, wherein the stored logged
2   communications include an indication of the date and time of each
3   communication's direction or receipt.

1   54. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2   configured to retrieve any of the stored communications from the
3   memory.

1   55. The system of claim 28, wherein the processor is further
2   configured to (i) receive, from a shipping agent, a first notice
3   that goods have been delivered to the purchaser, (ii) store in the
4   memory an indication that the first notice has been received, (iii)
5   receive, from the purchaser, a second notice that the delivered
6   goods are acceptable, (iv) store in the memory an indication that
7   the second notice has been received, and (v) initiate a credit to
8   an account associated with the seller.

1   56. The system of claim 55, wherein the credit to the seller
2   account is initiated after at least one of (i) a predetermined
3   period, beginning upon receipt of the first notice, has elapsed, or
4   (ii) receipt of the second notice.

1   57. An article of manufacture for integrated event tracking of an
2   electronic escrow transaction, the article of manufacture
3   comprising:
4   a computer readable medium; and
5   computer programming stored on the medium;
6   wherein the stored computer programming is configured to be
7   readable from the computer readable medium by a computer to thereby
8   cause the computer to operate so as to:
9   receive an instruction from a purchaser, via a network, to
10 effect an electronic escrow transaction associated with a sale,
11 made via the network, of goods or services from a seller;

12   direct at least one network communication with each of the
13 purchaser, the seller and at least one financial institution in
14 effecting the electronic escrow transaction; and
15   store a log of each communication associated with the
16 electronic escrow transaction in a memory.
 1

 1

 1